(a) the number and names of companies of gas distributors in Madhya Pradesh and the criteria of appointing LPG distributors;

(b) whether Government would make arrangement of gas agencies according to the requirement of the State; and

(c) if so, the number of gas agencies targeted to be opened in the State during this year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (c) At present, 3 Public Sector Oil Marketing Company i.e. Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) are operating LPG distributorships in the State of Madhya Pradesh.

As on 1.4.2001, Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies were operating 343 LPG distributorships. Further, 304 LPG distributorships are pending for commissioning at present under various Marketing Plans in the State of Madhya Pradesh. The selection of distributorships is made through dealer Selection Boards (DSB) in a phased manner and it may not be possible at this stage to indicate the exact number of allotments for LPG distributorships during 2001-2002.

Exploration of oil deposits in Kerala

3165. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would consider to undertake any new projects for the exploration of oil and natural gas in the coastal areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any proposal to explore the oil deposits in the coastal belt of Kerala; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. With a view to accelerate the exploration of oil and gas in the coastal areas of the country, the Government has signed Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with Public Sector Companies, Private Sector Companies and their consortia in respect of 24 exploration blocks in shallow water areas and 15 exploration blocks in deep water areas under first and second round of New Exploration Licensing Policy. (NELP).

Out of the above 39 blocks, 3 blocks in shallow water and 1 block in deep water fall wholly or partly in the areas offshore of the State of Kerala.

Irregularities in allotment of dealership for petroleum products

3166. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Punjab Kesari under the heading 'Kendra Sarkar Ke Petrol pump va Gas Agency Vitran Mein Bhajapa Netaon ke Pau Barah;'

(b) if so, the details thereof including the total number of persons who were awarded dealership of Petrol, Gas and Kerosene;

(c) how many of them were actually connected with the leaders of B.J.P. MLA/MP; and

(d) what is Government's reaction in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) During the period 12.6.2000 to 31.7.2001, 41 retail outlets and 35 LPG distributorships and 2 SKO-LDO dealerships have been allotted in the State of Haryana by the newly-constituted Dealer Selection Boards.